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Modern Hinduism

DOES IT MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIA?

By Rev. J. P. JONES, D. D., of Madura

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FOREWORD.

It is our purpose about once a year to publish a number of the Envelope Series of an apologetic character, a defense of the missionary motive and work. While we hear fewer objections to foreign missions than formerly, we hear enough to warrant us in furnishing special literature on the subject. What we want is open-minded, honest and thorough discussion on the part of those who know. Such discussion you may look for in this little quarterly from time to time.

To begin with, here is the question about India. Many who have visited that country say "Hinduism is good enough for the Hindus." Now is it? That is the question. What we want is facts, and conclusions based on facts — not guesses, or imaginings or longings, and certainly not misstatements or distortions, but clear, sheer realities. Who can and will tell us the truth?

Our mind turned at once to Dr. J. P. Jones, of Madura, the well-known author of "Krishna or Christ," the man who has thirty years of living and close association with the Hindus behind his judgment, no mere traveler but a citizen of India, the man who is a friend of the Hindus, and who has proved his friendship by a life of devoted service in their behalf. Hear him.

And when you hear, pass the word along. This false idea about Hinduism is in the air, and you can do a distinct service to the Kingdom and to India by giving Dr. Jones a hearing.

Do you take this quarterly? If not you ought. In it the American Board prints much of its best material. We are not afraid to have you examine any of our recent numbers. It will not be a question of money with you (the price is only ten cents) but of taking the time to send in your subscription. If at this point we might make a suggestion, it would be in the words of the somewhat over-worked motto: "Do it now."

CORNELIUS H. PATTON,

Home Secretary.

MODERN HINDUISM

DOES IT MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIA?

By Rev. J. P. JONES, D.D.

There is no response more frequently made to the missionary appeal in India than that couched in the following words: "Yes, yes, Christianity is a good religion. It is all right for you; but Hinduism will do for us. Every people to its own faith. 'All roads lead to Rome.' If a man is only sincere, any faith will bring him to God and to soul-rest."

Rev. J. P. JONES, D.D.

In the West, also, the missionary sometimes meets with a similar reply. The rational evolutionist says to him, — "Let the people alone to evolve their own faith. It is not by cataclysmic change, but by growth, that they will ultimately find their true redemption." Others, who have listened perhaps to the pleasing words of a clever, yellow-robed Hindu Swami, ask the question, — "Why should we spend our money in sending the Gospel to these wonderfully bright people of the East; are they not able to take care of themselves; and is not their faith adequate to their needs?"

To all these objections we might reply that if our ancestors had been left to themselves many centuries ago, we, their descendants, would still be idolaters as they were.

Instead of replying thus, we simply say to our friends in the West, — "Come with us to India and see for yourselves. Live, as some of us have, for a third of a century in this land, and see, hear, feel and understand what this Hinduism is. And, having understood the situation, ask yourselves whether this ancestral faith of India has in itself real saving power and redeeming efficacy for any one." I maintain that, to know Hinduism, is to feel a deep sympathy with the people who have inherited it as their faith and to desire to bring to them the glorious Gospel of life and of salvation in Christ Jesus.

I.

India is the mother of religions. One half of the population of the earth are found in the faiths which had their origin and, for many centuries, their home in this land. The people of India are, perhaps, the most religious upon earth. In this respect they are very unlike the Japanese and the Chinese who are worldly, prosaic and practical. Hindus are poetic, other-worldly and spiritually minded. They have a keen instinct for things of the spirit. They are also very unlike the people of the West. Among Westerners religion is largely an incident in life. It has a separate department, and a small corner in the life of a man there. In the East, on the other hand, religion enters into every detail of life. There is hardly a department or an interest in life which is not subsidized by religion and which has not to be conducted in a religious way.

Moreover, the people of India thought out and elaborated most profound systems of theosophic thought in the far remote past. When our ancestors were in the depths of savagery Indian sages were indulging in metaphysical disquisitions which are, even today, the admiration of Western sages. And there were many among those ancient Hindu rishis whose self-propelled flight towards God and divine things and whose spiritual aspirations and yearnings were so beautiful that we can but speak with profound respect of them and entertain the highest admiration for them.

In view of all these things we dare not say that God did not visit this people, or leave himself without witness among them. While He was leading the Jews in the time of Moses He was also stirring this people through its old rishis or sages. And while He was rebuking the degenerate Jewish people through their later prophets He was raising and inspiring the great prophet of India, the Buddha, to protest against a debased Brahmanism.

Pilgrims Bathing in the Ganges

II.

But religion is not merely a philosophy, or even an aspiration; it is something vastly more than this.

The Hindu Swami will visit the West and discourse sweetly, in persuasive English, upon Hindu philosophy. But he will not practise his *religious rites* or reveal his *idolatrous habits* and his bondage to caste to those Western people who admire him. These things would at once create a revulsion of feeling against him and his philosophy. And yet these are much more an essential part of his faith than all his moral platitudes and eloquent disquisitions. And it should not be forgotten that this same Swami, in crossing the oceans to visit the West, violates one of the most prominent commands of his faith and makes himself an outcast to his own people. Moreover the religious philosophies of the East were never tested or illumined

by a perfect life. They are both impractical and unethical and cannot satisfy the masses of humanity.

Above all, we must remember that the Hinduism of today is not the Brahmanism of thirty centuries ago. It has been the passion of that faith, from the beginning, to absorb all cults and faiths that have come in contact with it. Hinduism is an amorphous thing; it has been compared to a many-colored and many-fibered cloth in which are mixed together Brahmanism, Buddhism, Demonolatry and Christianity. And all these they would absorb, utterly regardless of the many contradictions which they bring together.

The religious books of Hinduism are the most voluminous in the world; I mean those that are regarded as authority and are included in the vague term, "The Hindu Bible." As the centuries have passed, this sacred literature of India has steadily deteriorated.

The Christian's Bible is a progressive revelation. Starting with the dim rays of Genesis and Exodus the Light of God's Revelation grew more and more until the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and up to the noonday light of the life of our dear Lord. This is one of the clearest evidences of the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible.

The opposite of this is true in the Hindu Shastras. Starting with the lofty aspiration of the Rig Veda, and with the profound metaphysical disquisitions of the Upanishads, they have gradually descended, in manifest degeneracy, down to the most recent productions of the Puranas and the Tantras which are a wilderness of wild legends, inane dialogues, lying incantations and gross immoralities. And yet, these latter furnish the religious food of the people. For every one that knows the older books a hundred are familiar with the more recent; and in them they find their religious pabulum and their motives to religious endeavor.

This is true also of the gods of India. The earliest of the Vedic gods possessed elements of nobility. The most universally recognized of their divinities in primitive times, Varuna, is wanting in the vain passions and moral obliquities of more recent gods. Indeed, as one follows the course of time and the consequent multiplication of deities

in India, he sees in their pantheon a steady deterioration of character, until we come to the most popular of modern Hindu deities, Krishna and Kali, the one well called "The incarnation of lust," and the other "The goddess of blood." One is the deification of human passion, while the other is an apotheosis of brute force. And yet the cults of these two deities have attained, at the present time, the maximum of popularity throughout the land.

The same fact is manifest in connection with the customs of the people. In early Vedic times hardly one of those institutions which now so disfigure this religion existed among the people. Idolatry, the caste system and the many forms of degradation of women are of a later growth. And hardly ever, in all the history of the country, did they exist and flourish as they do at the present time.

Thus it will be seen that, while the religion of the Brahmans was in its earliest, primitive stage a merely ethnic faith, and largely the echo of the spiritual yearning of the human soul, its development has neither added to its power nor broadened its horizon. On the contrary, it grows weaker and has, age after age, added superstition to superstition until it has reached its maximum of error and of evil at the present time.

III.

What then is Modern Hinduism?

We shall endeavor to analyse it and present some of its outstanding features, such as are witnessed all over the land.

(1). That which obtrudes itself upon all sides and which is, perhaps, the most determining factor of modern Hinduism is its caste system.

In other lands mean social distinctions obtain and divide the people. In India only is Caste a *religious* institution, founded under the authority of heaven, penetrating every department, and entering into every detail of life, and enforced by strictly religious penalties. It is one of the oldest institutions in the world, and has for twenty-five centuries ruled India with an iron hand. It is the greatest curse which has ever befallen a people, keeping them in religious and social bondage.

It has stereotyped society, destroyed all ambition, crushed every individual initiative, and thus, making advancement an impossibility, it has overwhelmed the land with poverty and exalted custom as a god. It holds the people with an iron chain to the past and makes progress, national unity and political independence thus far an impossibility. All the forces of Hinduism conspire to bind a man for ever to the class in which he was born; to try to get out of it is impiety and religious insubordination. The man who defies caste by marrying outside of it, by eating with those who are not his relatives, by contact with those whom Hinduism calls a lower caste than himself, or by engaging in a work which his ancestors did not do — a man who does any of these things is supposed to defy his gods and abjure his faith. For any of these he is outcasted. And to be outcasted in India means to be banned by his religion, shunned by his own people and cursed by society. One has well said that Hinduism and Caste are convertible terms.

(2). Another outstanding feature of modern Hinduism is its Polytheism.

While Pantheism is the essential philosophy of the land — a Pantheism which denies the existence of all beings and everything save Brahm, the Supreme Soul, — nevertheless this Pantheism, has, in the popular mind, degenerated into the greatest pantheon the world has ever known. Even ten centuries ago its gods were said to number three hundred and thirty millions! And this army of deities has been multiplying ever since. Even twenty-five centuries ago the fertile imagination of the Brahman had so peopled this world with gods and godlets of all grades that the stern and sensible mind of the great Buddha became disgusted with the whole pantheon; so that he established his new faith as a reaction from the old to the extent of even ignoring any Divine Being in his new religion.

If, in those earlier days, such a man was unable to endure this manifestation of human folly, what can we not say in these days, when in addition to the acknowledged host of well known Hindu deities every family has its god and every hamlet its protecting demons; and when trees, rivers, mountains and a thousand other objects repre-

sent to the popular mind, each in itself, a separate godlet. One can well say that India has gone mad with its passion for multiplying its gods.

(3). Moreover, this pantheon has been incarnated. It has descended into a wild and hideous idolatry. There is no other land on earth where idolatry is so rampant as it is in India. Images are found everywhere. If the gods are numberless, how much more the idols which represent them and which are found in every hamlet and house and upon the roadsides!

Man with Iron Frame through his Cheek 1

In addition to those idols which are made for regular and permanent worship there are myriad others which are made of clay and other perishable substances, to be used for the time only, and then to be thrown into the river or washed away by the rain.

And what hideous objects these Hindu idols are! The images of the gods of the ancient Greeks were beautiful; and one feels sometimes almost inclined to excuse an image worship where ignorance weds art to religion and combines beauty with devotion.

But there is no such excuse for the idolatry of India. In all my travels through this great land, during nearly thirty years of residence here, I have hardly seen any image, or idol, which is

what might be called an artistically beautiful object. On the other hand, many of them are peculiarly revolting and demoniacal in appearance. The most universally worshipped god in all India is Ganesh. His idols are found all over the land, not only in temples and shrines but on roadsides and in other places where people gather. And this Ganesh, the son of Siva, is represented by the grossest and most hideous idols. This "pot-bellied god" has his body crowned with an elephant head!

Of course Hindu taste cannot be judged by western criteria. One cannot fail to recognise this fact in trying to judge types of human beauty in this land. But even Hindu types of beauty are not at all realized in their idols. It would often seem as if that which was most revolting in appearance is that which appeals most strongly to the Hindu, as an outward expression of the divine. In any case it is true that the idolatry of India is farthest removed from the chaste, the beautiful and the elevating. And this evil is intensified by the fact that all worshipped idols are bathed with oil, and, therefore, attract all the grime, dust and dirt of the immediate vicinity. Educated Hindus, though they tell you that these idols are only for the ignorant masses, rarely decline to unite with their families in bringing their offerings to, and in worshipping, the same.

Some will tell us that in idolatry people do not worship the idol itself, but the god which is supposed to reside within it. Even if this were true, one could not admire such a worship when he knows the character of the god which is supposed to reside therein. But their statement regarding this is not true. I have personally inquired of many of the common people who are idolaters, and I have never yet found a man whose mind, in worship, passes beyond the idol itself. I admit that educated men may leap in thought, behind the image; but the masses of the people do not. It is, at best, a debasing worship and drags the people down to the level of the hideous objects before which they prostrate themselves.

A well-known Hindu writer wrote recently to his fellow Hindus as follows in the *Madras Christian College Magazine:*

"I do urge most emphatically that, whatever may have been the original intention and whatever may be the esoteric meaning, the millions that perform idolatrous practices in this country see nothing symbolic behind the image and take the whole show quite literally. And can anything be more degrading to an intelligent human being? We know that all religions are necessarily more or less anthropomorphic. But our popular Hinduism surpasses everything else in this respect too. There is a famous shrine in this presidency where the deity's *chota hazri* [early morning meal] begins with bread and butter, and he goes on eating without respite till midnight, when he appropriately takes a decoction of dried ginger to help his digestion, before he retires to his bed room with his consorts. There is another famous shrine where a cigar is left in the bed room every night for his godship to smoke. In another shrine, under the management of a nominal ascetic, fetters are applied to the god's feet whenever the temple exchequer runs low, to extort money offerings from the devotees and pilgrims. In numerous other shrines the deity is taken out in procession and whipped publicly for having committed petty thefts. In one shrine the whole process of a highway robbery is acted out in detail during the annual festival. Births, marriages, deaths and similar occurrences are, of course, as common and frequent in our temples as in our homes. Gentlemen, can any amount of esoteric white-washing justify these disgraceful and fairly incredible practices? Then there are the *deva dasies*, our vestal 'virgins,' of whom even small and poor temples have one or two to boast. They are the recognized prostitutes of the country, and many sociologists are of opinion that no 'civilized' human society can completely get rid of such a class. Is that any reason why we should associate them with our religion and tempt the devil himself with their presence in our holiest places and shrines?"

(4) Another marked feature of modern Hinduism is its devil-worship. This is peculiarly manifest in South India. In the Madras presidency, whose fifty million population is mostly Dravidian, nine tenths of the people have inherited the faith of their ancestors, which is Demonolatry.

When Brahmanism came to South India, many centuries ago, it found entrenched among the people, everywhere and universally, this ancient cult. The Brahmans, recognizing this, did what they have always done; they said unto the people, "We have not come to destroy your religion; we will take your demons and demonesses, marry them to our gods, and give them shrines and worship in our temples. Come with them and be a part of our religion. We will give you the privileges, and confer upon you the dignity and blessing, of our great religion." The people were impressed by this offer, accepted the situation and were absorbed with their religion, into the

Boy Carrying Heavy Frame in Fulfillment of Parents' Vow

Brahmanical faith. From that time forward they have been recognized as Hindus, and have, after a fashion, been loyal members of that faith.

But let it not be supposed that, by becoming Hindus, they have deserted their ancestral religion and have ceased to be devil-worshippers. Far from it. Hinduism proper is to them a mere plaything, or a festive pastime. On special Hindu holidays and, perhaps, on occasions of pilgrimage, they will visit these Hindu temples and bring their offerings to the deities of Brahmanism. But their chief concern and their daily religious occupation is found in the appeasing of the many devils whose abode is supposed to be in their countless village shrines and under well

known trees in their hamlets. They have not abated one jot of their belief in the supremacy of these devils in their life affairs; and they always stand in fear of them and do what they can to satisfy their bloody demands.

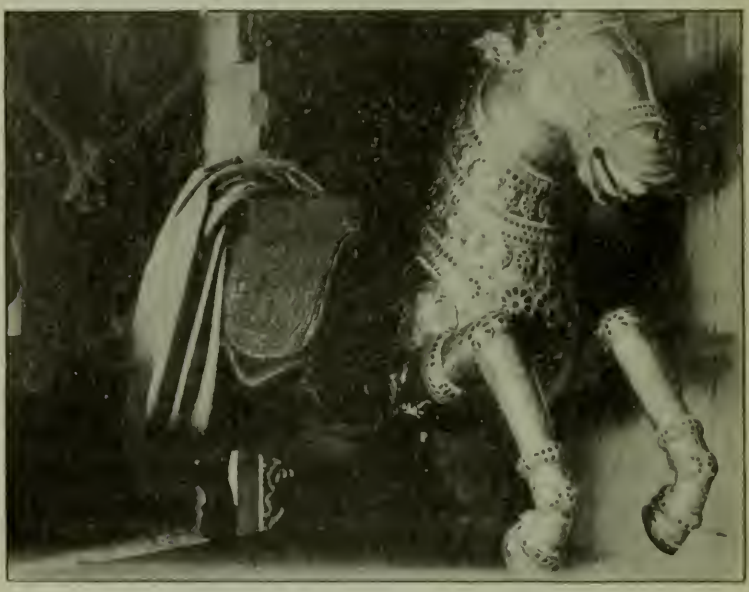
Thus, at least nine tenths of the people of South India are, first of all, demonolaters and secondly, but a long way behind, Hindus. And yet a great many people, in Western lands, think of these people as the pure worshippers of the highest type of the Brahmanical faith!

It should not be forgotten that all over India there are probably fifty millions of people who are the so-called outcastes of the land, the miserable products of the infamous caste system of Hinduism. They are "the submerged tenth" of India. They are not only socially ostracised, they are under the definite ban of the Hindu faith. They are the hewers of wood and drawers of water of Brahmanism. They have no place in Hinduism proper; they are not permitted to enter any of its temples. They have no right to receive whatever comforts the religion may confer; its rights and its privileges are entirely denied to them. But the tyranny of the religion has been such, during the many centuries of the past, as to keep this class of people not only in absolute social servitude, but also in religious dependence; and has taught them (because it has compelled them) to be satisfied with the spiritual crumbs which are the meanest remnants of what the religion professes to give its members.

I have often felt, as I have talked with these poor miserable Pariahs, that I was incapable of understanding their willingness to remain thus loosely attached to a faith which denied to them its most elementary comforts and blessings. The mystery is doubtless to be explained by their supreme abjectness and helplessness which have been ground into them by many centuries of bondage. The consequence is, that while these many millions of out caste people are numbered among Hindus, and regard themselves as Hindus, Hinduism itself has for them nothing but curses; and, more than all others, these must be satisfied with the devil worship of their fathers.

(5). We have not yet sounded the depth of modern Hinduism. Beneath all these lower

aspects of it is still found what may be called its lowest stratum — Fetichism. There are many people and tribes in India who have not ascended sufficiently high in religious conception to make for themselves definite images of the gods they worship. Like the Africans they are content to take unshapen objects such as a rock or stone and regard it as possessed of some spirit and worship it. Sir Alfred Lyall, that well-known authority on India, has told us that one can find in India, as in no other land, religion in all forms and in all grades of development, from the lowest type of animism to the most spiritual and abstruse



Horse on which the Gods Ride at Night

pantheism. I myself have seen, within the area of one acre of land in South India, the instruments of these varied forms of worship, from a greasy, round stone before which the lowest classes prostrate themselves, to an image of one of the supreme gods of Hinduism. There is not a phase of worship, however high or mystical, or however mean or degraded, which has not its devotees in this land.

(6). Modern Hinduism is also guilty of harboring and fostering immorality.

This is a cruel statement to make concerning any faith. But justice compels me to add this as one of the characteristics of Hinduism. It is true that there are many forms of Hinduism and

many of its writings which are perfectly free from this charge. And yet some of the most revered and popular writings of this religion are so full of obscenity and impure suggestion, that, to publish them in a Christian land in the English tongue, would make the publisher liable to imprisonment. When, years ago, Lord Dalhousie, the viceroy of India, enacted a law punishing obscenity, the leaders of the Hindu religion were so exercised by it that the government had to exempt religious writings of Hinduism and emblems of that faith from the action of the law. There are religious books in India today, which are classical in the beauty of their language, but which the Universities of India decline to use as text books because of their gross obscenity.

One of the most demoralizing institutions to the youth of India are the temple cars which are found in every village of any consequence throughout the land. They are erected at great expense, by temple authorities, and are most elaborately carved and are used for the conveyance of the gods through the village streets upon festival occasions. There is hardly one of those cars which is not disfigured by grossly sensual carvings such as ought to bring blushing shame to any decent and self-respecting community. They are open to the public gaze, and children of the village daily play under their shadow and gaze daily upon their vile and disgusting sights. The government would forbid the erection of such cars. tomorrow, if they had not pledged themselves not to interfere with the religion of the people!

In the Vaishnava cult of Hinduism there is at least one set well-known throughout the land whose worship is loaded with impurity and whose worshipers, at certain festivals, specially yield themselves to all forms of sexual practices such as cannot be mentioned. Sakthi worship, or the worship of the goddesses, lends itself definitely to this gross evil; and the leading Tantraic books of this cult are so filthy that they are not fit to be translated. In Bengal, where the worship of Durgai, the wife of Siva, is dominant, the natives themselves are beginning to protest against the lewdness, obscenity, and licentiousness which prevail at their great holi festival, which is the annual festival of the goddess.

Another institution connected with the temple worship of India, and of which Hinduism ought to be heartily ashamed, is that of dancing girls. Little girls in their infancy are devoted and dedicated by their own mothers to the temples. They are supposed to be married to the gods of the temple and are called "the servants of the gods." They dance in attendance upon the gods, upon all festival occasions, and are an inherent part of the temple worship. But the sad thing about these women is that their own mothers knew, when they dedicated them in infancy, that they were binding them to a life of shame. For the dancing girls are the professional prostitutes of India. There are a host of these women (twelve thousand of them in South India alone) who, without their own consent, and in the sacred name of religion, have been handed over to this life of shame. to corrupt and debase the youth of the land. Their life is a loud cry against their mother faith which systematically devotes them to destruction of soul and body. Some educated men of the land today denounce this as an evil which should be stopped. But the leaders of the faith turn a deaf ear to all such cries.

(7). The treatment of woman, within Hinduism, is worthy of attention.

Hinduism has never looked with kindness or consideration upon women. It seems to have been its settled policy to treat its women with contempt and unkindness. The consequence is, that the girl babe is never welcome in the Hindu family. And from the cradle to the grave woman has no independence or right within the pale of this faith. During childhood she is in bondage to her father; during her marriage she must give implicit obedience to her husband; and as a widow she remains the ward of her sons.

Look at the disabilities under which the Hindu woman labors today.

She is held in ignorance. Only six Hindu women out of one thousand are able to read and write. She has never been regarded as worthy of an education. Her ignorance has been regarded as her safety, and has been the studied policy of Hinduism.

She has never been esteemed worthy to know the sacred books of her own faith. It is a crime

in Hinduism today for any man to teach a woman the most sacred truths of her religion. Her mind is not a fit receptacle for such truths!

While she has nothing to do in choosing for herself a husband, she is bound in infancy, through holy wedlock, to a child like herself. Her child husband may die before he attains manhood, when she becomes a widow. And because her stars are supposed to have had an influence in his death she is regarded as the evil star of the home and is treated with cruelty.

Owing to this evil custom of child marriage there are today twenty-six million widows in this land, of whom four hundred thousand are under fifteen years of age! It is not simply that the lot

"Holy Men" of India

of these poor women is one of greatest hardship and contempt; they also become the prey of lustful men and fall into the grossest sins. In modern times the government has tried to lighten the burdens of womanhood in the land; but the representatives of Hinduism and its custodians all stand in the way of any helpful legislation, and are determined to keep women in servitude at all hazards.

(8). The religious ascetic represents one of the characteristic features of modern Hinduism.

Religious asceticism has been the ideal of the Hindu life, from time immemorial. The man who has given up all earthly pursuits and wanders with beggar's bowl in hand, from place to place,

making pilgrimages to all the holy places of India; or who separates himself entirely from men and devotes years to the solitude of the wilderness in the cultivation of piety — he it is who is the admiration of the whole Hindu community. And it is for this very reason that so many men in India today don the yellow robe of this profession and make capital out of this sentiment of the people.

There are at least five millions of these religious mendicants who are entirely non-productive and live upon the people of the land. A few of them, doubtless, are sincere and are seeking after communion with God. But the vast majority of them are lazy and rotten to the core. Their life is known to be utterly worthless, and they are morally pestiferous in their influence upon the whole community. Nine tenths of them are lazy; and it is known that they have entered this profession because they are too indolent to support themselves by honest work. And yet the people accept them as representing the highest type of piety in the land. Even the poorest among them would give their last morsel to these worthless men. And even when such offerings are not voluntary there are very few in the community who would dare to refuse an offering to these religious mendicants, because they are so ready to invoke the most dreadful imprecations upon those who decline to give anything to them. And there are few things that an orthodox Hindu dreads more than the curse of a religious ascetic.

Thus, though these men are known to trample under foot every law of the decalogue and are utterly useless to the whole community, the people nevertheless regard them very highly and shower their blessings upon them.

In any land the maintenance of such an army would be a great burden upon the people; in India where they are so poor how great this burden must be, and how great must be the curse of so large a host preying both morally and physically upon the rest of the community!

It is equally disastrous to the conception of the common people concerning their faith, that so large a body of recognized hypocrites should be highly esteemed as exemplars of the holy life.

The existence of this class of worthless men reveals, also, another striking fact which char-

acterizes the religion of India, and that is its utter divorce of faith and morals. Hinduism has never recognized any connection, and least of all any essential union, between piety and ethics. As we have seen, the most pious men in the land, according to Indian ideas, may be the most immoral. This has been one of the fatal defects of Hinduism from the earliest times. Conscience has found very small place in this religion of the Brahmans.

Man Lying on Spikes for Merit

(9). Modern Hinduism also inculcates the spirit of pessimism among its people. The Puranas tell us, and the people universally believe it, that we are now living in *Kali Yuga,* the iron age, in which all things are evil, and in which righteousness is a thing largely unknown among the people. All the forces of this age are against the good, and it leaves no encouragement to any one to try to do, and to be, good. We are told that only five thousand years of this evil age have elapsed, and that four hundred and twenty-seven thousand years are still left to debauch and debase our race, before any relief will come. To a people who are fully convinced, as the Hindus are, of the truth of this teaching an ambition to do great things and to try to be worthy and noble men is an impossibility. There are few things in connection with Hinduism which are more of a hindrance to the progress of the people than this universal conviction that they are living in an age which is essentially evil and in which no good can prosper.

(10). Add to this the even more potent belief of the people in astrology. The planets and the stars, the moon and the nodes, are living gods, they say, which wield an influence over the life and destiny of human beings. The astrologer

is perhaps the most important functionary in the social and religious life of the people. No marriage can be performed unless the horoscope of the bride and the bridegroom harmonize. No social or domestic events of importance, and specially no religious ceremony of any consequence, can be carried on save during what are called auspicious days and moments. Astrology is the left hand of Hinduism, and it has supreme authority in the direction of most of its affairs.

Add to this the belief in omens, which enters very largely into human life and thought. A Hindu will not start upon a journey save on what is astrologically an auspicious day; and if a lizard crosses his path after he has started upon his journey it is regarded as an ill omen, and he will at once return home. He spends much of his time in watching such omens, even an ass's bray carries a significance to him. If it is heard in the east his success will be delayed; in the south-east, it portends death; in the south, it means wealth, etc. It matters not how important it may be that a man should undertake a journey at a certain time, he will never leave at that time if he finds it to be inauspicious. When the new Governor of Madras arrived recently at his destination the reception given to him by the Hindus had to be postponed because it was ignorantly put at an hour which was *Rahu Kalam* — an inauspicious hour!

In a thousand similar ways the Hindu people are controlled and handicapped by a host of silly superstitions which make life a burden to them and which rob them of efficiency and sanity in life.

I might continue by adding to these characteristics of the Hindu faith.

But let me not be understood as implying that there are not some redeeming features to the Hindu religion, and that there are not some earnest souls who rise above the foibles of their faith and are better than their religion. I have described above what is popular Hinduism — the religion of the masses as it is practised every day by nine tenths of the whole Hindu community. There is, of course, a Higher Hinduism which furnishes food and spiritual comfort to the select few. These seek after spiritual attainment and

final absorption in the deity through the higher exercises of asceticism and knowledge. They seem to us foolish and impracticable as means of redemption; and yet these wise men of India follow after them with weary persistence.

There are also in India, at the present time, reform movements which try to improve the present order of things; and there are books which breathe of noble aspiration after higher spiritual things.

But the Hinduism which we see every day and which dominates the lives of the people, as a whole, I have striven to characterize above.

Holding Hands in One Position until Atrophied

IV.

What has Christianity done for Hinduism in the Past?

It should not be forgotten that Christianity has been in India for at least sixteen centuries. The Syrian Church on the Malabar Coast has been a living testimony to the Gospel of Christ and to the Christ Himself during all this time.

Many authorities upon the Hindu religion recognize the fact that the Hindus have not been slow to learn and adopt some things from our religion. Many a noble strain in Hindu literature can be traced to the influence of this knowledge of Christian teaching. Many claim that the doctrine of *Bhakti*, or of faith, is distinctly trace-

able to our religion, and is the nearest approach of any teaching of Hinduism to the Christian teaching of man's relationship to God. It is well-known that many of the legends connected with the infant Krishna pattern after the narrative of the infant Christ. A recent writer, Dr. Grierson, claims that this connection between Christianity and Hinduism is much more intimate than Western authorities, who have studied only the Sanskrit, have been willing to acknowledge. He claims that when these authorities will have learned the vernaculars of India and will have found new material for forming a judgment concerning this subject they will give to Christianity a larger place than they have been wont to, as a power in moulding the Hindu faith.

In modern times also our faith has been working, and is still working, in the removal of serious evils which have disfigured the Hindu religion. This Christian Government has put an end to many religious customs which have been a disgrace to the religion of the land; and this in all cases against the protest and opposition of the leaders of the Hindu faith. Such features of Hinduism as Thuggism, Suttee, human sacrifices, infanticide have been abolished by this Christian Government. About twenty laws have been enacted during the last century, with a view to abolishing sacred, religious customs and institutions which were repulsive to the Christian consciousness, but which had been perpetuated for centuries and cherished by the religion of the land.

And today, Hinduism is voluntarily abandoning some gross evils which cannot stand the sunlight of Christian teaching; and is so transforming others that they may appear innocuous. The gradual transformation of Hinduism under the influence of Christian light and through the stimulus of Western civilization is manifest to any one who will but live in this land for a few years.

And above all, the Christ ideal is spreading, with ever increasing speed and power all over India and is giving to the people new visions of a perfect life and a new inspiration to attain unto the same. It is an interesting fact that India, in all her history, has not produced a character, either among its gods or sages, which the people

themselves and their leaders have been willing to recognize as, in any way, a complete ideal of what life ought to be and a worthy exemplar for men to follow. Today, for the first time, India is finding in Christ that great desideratum of the land which so abounds in philosophy, precept and ritual, — a perfect Life and a supremely noble character which they can follow with confidence and imitate with the assurance that they will be living the best life possible. The educated men of India especially are becoming more and more enamored of the Christ and are seeking, through the many books which give His history and teaching, to know Him and follow after Him. That classic book of Christian devotion, "The Imitation of Christ," is finding an ever widening circle of readers among Hindu gentlemen. I sold twelve copies of the same to a devout Brahman man of culture who uses it daily as his book of devotion and who presented these copies to his Brahman friends. At the present time a Tamil Hindu magazine is publishing serially a new Tamil translation of this same book of Thomas a Kempis as an aid to the devotion of its Hindu readers!

There is nothing more encouraging to the Christian worker in India than the growing place of honor, affection and devotion which our Lord is winning among the Non-Christians of India. Even twenty-five years ago the famous Chunder Sen, though not a Christian himself, could exclaim, — "None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus, is worthy to wear this diadem, India, and He shall have it."

It is also a very interesting fact that Hindus are becoming more and more desirous to pattern their institutions after Christian institutions which they see in the land. Prayer meetings, Tract Societies, Young Men's Hindu Societies, Reform Societies — these and many others are patterned after Christian models and breathe, to a large extent, not a Hindu, but a Christian spirit and ideals. The last National Congress Meeting was opened by a beautiful prayer, which was utterly foreign to Hindu method and thought, and which could hardly be distinguished from a very beautiful Christian prayer. Hindus do not hesitate to copy after us in a thousand ways,

which emphasizes the fact that the leavening influence of Christ and His faith is accomplishing wonders in the land at present. Indeed, to many Christian workers here this leaven of Christianity in India is the most encouraging fact connected with missionary effort.

And even the present unrest and discontent which prevail in most parts of the country are but the legitimate fruit of Christian thought and example in the land. The Spirit of Christ in India has stirred the people to new thoughts of rights and liberty; their eyes have been opened to new visions of progress and of power. And

Gaining Merit by Being Buried in Ground

they are now reaching after these blessings whose preciousness Christianity alone has taught them to appreciate. The method of seeking these blessings is not always wise; and, in their eager yearning, they do very foolish things. But their new ambition and ideals, which have come to them through Christianity, are admirable and worthy of all encouragement.

Western people should not forget, when they listen to the eloquence of Hindu yellow-robed Swamis in America and England, that they are not listening to orthodox Hindu utterances. Nearly every one of these men has been trained in Christian institutions and has been thoroughly

imbued with Christian ideas; and all of them have been living for years in a Christian atmosphere, so that they have unconsciousiy imbibed and are swayed by Western and Christian thought. And thus their teaching is far more Christian in its spirit than Hindu. There is an impassable gulf between the thoughts and sentiments of such men and those of the recognized pundits and leaders of Hindu thought in this land. Western travelled Swamis teach a heterodoxy which is banned in India and they interpret the doctrines of their fathers in a way that is perfectly unintelligible to the sages and the leaders of Hindu thought.

And if any one desires to know the inner life and thought of Western-travelled Swamis, let him follow them back to their native land and see them yield to the idolatry and superstitions and the antiquated customs which are so absurd to the West and which are so foreign to their own teaching in Western countries.

I have spent just one half of my life in India, have freely turned among the people, have studied their language, their customs and their faith, both in its higher aspects and in its lower. I have watched the current of events and have studied the under currents of thought and of religious aspiration. I love more and more the people and appreciate increasingly the greatness of the Hindu race and its wonderful possibilities as a great people in the future. And yet I have never been more convinced of the great need of Christ and of Christianity by all the people, the highest and the lowest alike.

Nor has there ever been a time in the whole history of India when the doors of opportunity opened more widely before a Christian Missionary than at the present time. India needs only the best men, men of culture and of spiritual consecration; but she needs them and urgently. And she is more and more willing to listen to the message of God in Christ Jesus when it is presented with sympathy, love, and intelligence. India is awakening from the slumber of ages. Now is the opportunity for this land; and it is the greatest opportunity that any land can furnish to the devout Christian worker. May many more enter upon this greatest service for the redemption of this greatest land of the East.

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